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JACK STERRY, THE JESSIE SCOUT

AN INCIDENT OF THE SECOND BATTLE OF MANASSAS, ON WHICH TURNED THE COURSE OF THE CAMPAIGN AND THE FATE OF THE SOUTHERN ARMY

By

JOHN CUSSONS, Forest Lodge, Glen Allen, Virginia,

Confederate Scout,

Author of "A Glance at Current History,"
"The Passage of Thoroughfare Gap,"
"Some Modern Pillars of State,"
"Principles of Cryptography,"
"Assimilating the Indian,"
"Jack Sterry," Etc.

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An Unrecorded Episode of the American War

Jack Sterry, the Jessie Scout

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JOHN CUSSONS

II

Forest Lodge, Glen Allen, Virginia

Confederate Scout.

Past Grand Commander of the Confederate Veterans of Virginia, Ex-Chairman of History Committee, Author of "A Glance at Current History," "On Modern Pillars of State," "A Benevolent Assimilation of the Indian," "The Passage of Thoroughfare Gap," "The Principles and Literature of Cryptography," "Jack Sterry," Etc.

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Jack Sterry, the Jessie Scout

"THIS WAY, General Hood," said the guide, gracefully saluting and pointing northward, as the head of Longstreet's column swung toward the east. The guide, well mounted and wearing the uniform of a Confederate cavalryman, sat at the forks of the road near the little village of White Plains, in Fauquier County, Virginia.

The road which General Hood was taking leads to Thoroughfare Gap in Bull Run Mountain, and is the only practicable approach to the field of Manassas where Stonewall Jackson was then struggling with the army of General Pope.

Hood halted his column and closely questioned the guide, feeling certain that he was in error. And yet it would seem that the guide must be right. He was intelligent, confident, definite, certain of his instructions, and prompt and clear in his replies. He was a handsome young fellow with bold, frank eyes and a pleasant voice, and the precision of his statements gave weight to his words.

The situation was critical; no exigency of war could be more so. It was not merely the issue of a battle, but the fate of a campaign that hung in the balance!

Lee had taken the perilous step of dividing his army in the presence of an active adversary. He had sent Stonewall Jackson on a detour of some sixty miles to strike the rear and destroy the supplies of the Federal army at Manassas, and to cut its line of communication with Washington.

In an enterprise of this character the first step is not difficult. The vital problem is to bring the divided forces together

again. Lee's army must be promptly reunited, or its beleagured wing must perish!

It was 10 o'clock in the forenoon of August 28, 1862.

The two wings of the Confederate army were only fifteen miles apart, but the Bull Run Mountain range lay between them, and the Federals under Pope were probably close enough to seize the passes.

Jackson's situation seemed desperate. He had been marching or fighting day and night ever since he left the Rappahannock, and many of his troops were dropping in their tracks for want of sleep.

At sunset on the preceding day (that is on August 27), Pope's camps extended from Haymarket and Gainesville to Bristow Station, but Jackson's daring exploit at Manassas had drawn the bulk of the Federals toward that point, and in their efforts to surround him they were covering the mountain passes and thus barring him from a junction with Longstreet.

In this dangerous situation Stonewall Jackson took a step which seemingly violates every principle of military science. Beset as he was by overwhelming numbers he yet ventured to subdivide his little wing of the already divided army.

General A. P. Hill's Division was at Blackburn's Ford, on Bull Run, where it had snatched a few hours of sorely-needed sleep. At nightfall Stonewall Jackson dispatched that division on the open road to Centerville, thus seeming to threaten Washington. But with the remainder of his command he quietly stole off to the broken country lying west of Bull Run and north of the Warrenton Turnpike, and there he passed the night, curtained by the cavalry of Fitzhugh Lee.

This daring threat on Washington produced startling effects, and for some hours the whole situation was changed. General Pope believed Hill's Division to be the whole of Jack-

son's command, and he therefore rushed everything to the defence of his capital.

His dream of crushing Jackson had departed, and for a period there remained to him nothing but the hope of saving Washington from capture and his own army from annihilation.

Night came. There was no moon, and a slight haze somewhat dimmed the stars. Hill's Confederates, in light marching order, encountered no obstacle; but the mammoth army of Pope, with its heavy batteries and ponderous pontoons, encumbered the narrow roads; while the troops—their eyes dazed by their campfires—groped in the darkened woods and floundered in the ditches and blocked each other's way. It was a nightmare—frantic in effort, yet unavailing in results.

But with the coming of daylight order began to emerge, and the Federal commander was again in the saddle—alert, hopeful, and prodigal in the issuance of conflicting commands.

Jackson's ruse for the moment had saved him! It had given two-thirds of his army nearly five hours' sleep, and by drawing Pope from the mountain passes had opened the way for Longstreet's approach. General Hill, having reached Centreville, suddenly doubled, and with swift secrecy by a forced night march swung back southward and reunited with Jackson near Sudley Ford.

Jackson then took up a strong position, with his right near Groveton, on the Warrenton Turnpike, and thence gazed longingly toward Thoroughfare Gap, expecting Longstreet to appear.

Such was the situation when the guide's orders—back yonder at White Plains—would not only have taken Longstreet's corps away from the battlefield, but would have opened to the Federal army a clear course to Richmond.

The time was 10 a. m., August 28, 1862.

"Did General Jackson himself give you these instructions?" asked General Hood.

"Yes, General."

"When?"

"About four hours ago. I left soon after sunrise."

"What route did you come?"

"North of the mountain, General, by way of Gum Springs; there is no other road."

"Do you know where Stuart is?"

"I saw most of his command this morning. He is pushing with his main body for Sudley, to cover Jackson's rear. One brigade has gone north to guard the trains on the Aldie road."

"Trains on the Aldie road!" exclaimed Hood; "what trains are you talking about?"

"Stonewall Jackson's trains, General. He is pushing them toward Aldie, where I supposed you would join him."

"I have heard nothing of all this!" said the General.

"Then I'll tell you what it is, General Hood; those devilish Jessie Scouts are at it again!—cutting off Stuart's couriers! Jackson has heard nothing from Longstreet since yesterday morning, and he's afraid you'll follow the old order and try to join him by Thoroughfare Gap."

"Where is Jackson?" asked General Hood.

"I left him a little south of Sudley Springs, on the high ground commanding the turnpike."

"What is he doing?"

"Shortening his lines, General. You see Porter turned our right at Groveton last night, and McDowell took Thoroughfare Gap; and Ricketts was sent to support Buford's cavalry, who had seized the pass at Hopewell. At least that's what Stuart's scouts told me."

"You say Jackson's left is at Sudley Springs?"

"No, General Hood. I intended to say that his left was *near* Sudley Springs—about a half a mile south. Kearney and Hooker attacked there in column last night, doubling us up, and the enemy now holds both the road and the fords."

"But that would make Jackson's position untenable."

"Yes, General; that's the reason he's falling back. They say McClellan has abandoned the James and now covers Washington, and that Burnside has arrived from the coast. Within twenty-four hours—the way they figure it—Pope will have over a hundred thousand men. When I left there at sunrise, Jed Hotchkiss had all the pioneers out. He was cutting roads and clearing fords and bridging Catharpin Run, for that's the only way out now."

"How did you learn all these things?" asked General Hood; and there was a note of severity in his voice.

"Absorbed them from the atmosphere, I suppose," answered the guide rather languidly. Then, correcting himself with swift utterance, he continued: "I beg pardon, General Hood; no offense. I meant to say that a courier absorbs details of this sort from the atmosphere of headquarters—the atmosphere of conjecture and apprehension—the atmosphere so rife with the counsel of chaplains and the strategy of medical men, and the theories of quartermaster's clerks. Why, General, the very air is vocal with the enemy's doings! What with captured dispatches, and intercepted battle orders, and the reports of scouts and spies, we have literally no rest day or night. Then there are the revelations of prisoners, and the stories of deserters, and the never-ending chatter of junior staff officers. I tell you, General Hood, we couriers hear enough in a day to fill a book. And on forbidden subjects, you know, according to the proverb, 'Jack knows more than his master!'"

"Who and what are you?" demanded General Hood, who was perplexed and anxious, yet scarcely suspicious of treachery—the guide was so bland and free and unconstrained.

"I am Frank Lamar, of Athens, Georgia, enrolled with the cavalry of Hampton's Legion, but now detailed on courier service at the headquarters of Stonewall Jackson."

"Where's your saber?"

"I captured a handsome pistol from a Yankee officer at Port Republic, and have discarded my saber."

"Let me see your pistol."

It was a very fine silver-mounted Colt's revolver; one chamber was empty.

"When did you fire that shot?"

"Yesterday morning, General Hood, I shot a turkey buzzard sitting on the fence."

General Hood handed the pistol to Captain Cussons, commander of scouts. Cussons scrutinized the pistol, and the guide scrutinized Captain Cussons. As the captain drew General Hood's attention to the fact that the powder was still moist, showing that the pistol had been recently fired, the guide interposed, saying that he had reloaded after yesterday's practice, and had fired the shot in question at another buzzard just before the column came in sight, but that he didn't suppose General Hood would be interested in such a matter.

The guide was mistaken. General Hood was decidedly interested in the matter! Guides do not practice marksmanship when on duty between the lines.

It so happened that the Hampton Legion had been recently assigned to Hood, and was then marching with his division. A message was sent down the line requesting Colonel Gary, who was commanding the legion, to report at the head of the column.

And then the guide suddenly remembered that he had never really belonged to Hampton's Legion; that the story was a little romance of his, and had grown out of a love affair. In the Shenandoah Valley, he explained, there was a beautiful maiden who had caught his fancy, but the girl was romantic and did not care for plodding foot-soldiers. All her dreams were of knights and heroes and cavaliers on prancing steeds, so he had deserted from the infantry and captured a horse, and his real name was Harry Brooks, and he believed that in the stress of battle or campaign he could throw himself in the way of some enterprising commander and render such gallant service as would win approval; and when by daring deeds he had distinguished himself, as only a trooper can, he would confess his fault and leave the rest to fortune.

"Search that man!" exclaimed General Hood, impatiently; for the General was baffled and still uncertain. All his life had been passed in active service, yet this was a new experience to him.

The search revealed strange things. In the guide's haversack were little packages of prepared coffee and blocks of condensed soup and good store of hardtack, which facts the guide pleasantly dismissed with the remark that "It's a poor sort of Reb that can't forage on the enemy."

The next discovery had a deeper meaning. In the lining of his vest were found the insignia of a Confederate captain—the three gold bars being secured to a base which had a thin strip of flexible steel running lengthwise through it and slightly projecting at the ends. Further search revealed minute openings in the collar of his jacket, and into those openings the device was readily slipped and firmly held.

"What is the meaning of that?" asked General Hood, sternly.

There was an air of boyish diffidence and a touch of reproach in the young man's reply. Its demure humor was half playful, yet modest and natural, and its effect on the spectators was mainly ingratiating.

"Really, General Hood," he said, "you ask me such embarrassing questions. But I will tell you. It was just this way. Our girls, God bless them, are as devoted and patriotic as can be, but you couldn't imagine the difference they make between a commissioned officer and a private soldier. In short, I soon saw it was all up with me unless I could get promotion. Well, what was I to do? The War Department seemed blind, stone blind, to my merits, and as for my family influence it was altogether unavailing. So there I was, abandoned—heartlessly abandoned—and all for want of a little gold lace! Well, as my country would not promote me, I determined to promote myself. And I tell you the thought was an inspiration! Yes, indeed; those little golden bars had magic in them. In a word, or rather in three words, 'I came, saw, and overcame,' and the marriage takes place the moment this 'cruel war is over.' I'm sorry you're not attending to me, General, for I'm sure that if you would but deign to grace that occasion with your distinguished presence our cup of happiness would, indeed, be full."

General Hood missed all this. He was standing apart, talking earnestly with two of his brigade commanders, Colonel Wofford and General J. B. Robertson.

General Hood felt the responsibility of his position—felt it keenly, painfully.

Communicative as the guide was, the General could not read him. He might be an honest youth whose callow loquacity sprung from no worse a source than that of inexperience and undisciplined zeal, or he might be one of the most daring and dangerous spies that ever hid supernal subtilty beneath the mask of guilelessness.

True or false, his message bore on momentous issues, and it is not too much to say that an epoch in our history might turn on his lightest word—on the misinterpretation of a glance from his beaming black eyes—on the mere compression for a moment of his smiling boyish lips.

It was observed that he had related nothing but what might naturally have occurred under ordinary chances of battle; nothing indeed but what we had seriously apprehended; and above all, his statements were of a character which could not have been pre-arranged, for they were direct replies to our own questions.

Meanwhile the precious moments were slipping by!—fateful moments!—moments on which hung the tide of war; the fortunes of a great campaign; the doom perhaps of a new-born nation!

And there at the parting of the ways sat our boyish guide—frank, communicative, well-informed—leaning on the pommel of his saddle with the negligent grace of youth and replying with perfect good humor to all our questioning.

We had every reason to believe that Stonewall Jackson at that moment was beset by overwhelming numbers, and nothing seemed to us more likely than that the enemy would attempt to cut off our approach by the seizure of Thoroughfare Gap.

If Jackson's left flank was really at Sudley Springs, and his right at Groveton, his right would be "in the air," and a movement to turn it would virtually support an occupancy of the mountain passes. This would naturally drive Jackson northward, toward Aldie, as our guide had stated.

The whole situation was perilous in the extreme, and our doubts were agonizing.

If the Federals really occupied the passes of Hopewell and Thoroughfare they could easily hold them against our assault,

and if Jackson should attempt to join us there, they could destroy him.

On the other hand, if Jackson had really retreated toward Aldie we must at once change our course and join him by a forced march northward, and to do that would be not merely to abandon the campaign as planned, but also to relinquish to the enemy the short line and the open way to Richmond!

From his first moment of misgiving General Hood had taken measures to verify or discredit the guide's story. Swift reconnaisance was made in each direction, but the roads were ambushed by Jessie Scouts and infested with detachments of Buford's cavalry. Priceless moments were thus lost, and altho' we felt that Stonewall must be sore beset, yet we could not guess which road would take us to his battle or lead us away from it!

Meantime diligent questioning went on by staff officers and couriers, the benefit of every doubt being freely accorded, for many of us believed, almost to the last, that the guide was a true man.

But soon we were confronted by another revelation. Our guide's linen bore, in blue marking ink, the oval stamp of the Federal supply department.

"Suppose you tell us about this?" suggested Leigh Terrell, of General Law's staff.

"Well," replied the guide, "that takes me back to the affair at Cedar Mountain. The Yankees shot my horse there and captured me. Intending to escape, I shammed sick, and they sent me to the hospital at Alexandria. Of course, the first thing was a warm bath and the next was these clothes, both of which, I assure you, were a comfort to me."

"Yes, yes;" said Major Terrell, "but how did you escape?"

"Well," replied the guide, "there wasn't much discipline about the hospital nor in the town, but the camp was awfully strict. I hobbled around a bit, leaning on a stick and taking a look at things. The night relief, I found, sent in the remoter outposts with orders to report at evening roll call. This gave them the liberty of the town for an hour or two, and some of them generally took a turn at the saloons before going to camp.

"I had swapped a hospital blanket for a blue overcoat, and I pottered around with the boys and joined in their choruses and things. I was supposed to be a Yankee convalescent. Their muskets and belts would be carelessly stowed in the corners of the barroom, and as a fresh delegation came in—hot and thirsty, all calling for drinks at once—I hadn't the least difficulty in picking up a musket and sauntering off with it. Of course, I waited a moment outside, and listened, so that I could make a joke of the matter if anyone had happened to notice me. But it was all right.

"Well, I lay low until 'tattoo,' and then went in the direction of the guardhouse. You see there wasn't the ghost of a chance for escape unless I could get the countersign, so I concluded to play sentinel and get it that way—open and aboveboard, you know. Presently I slipped into a dark alley and adjusted my accouterments, and then stalked forth, fully armed, and took my post."

"Pretty cool, eh?" commented Captain Christian.

"Yes, rather so," said the guide; "but, you see, I had my Yankee overcoat on.

"After a while there was the measured tread of troops, marching as if on duty.

"'Halt! Who comes there?' I yelled, bracing myself and bringing my musket to the 'ready.'

"'Grand rounds!' was the impressive reply.

"'Advance, grand rounds, and give the countersign!' says I.

"It was drizzling at the time, and a portly officer in gum boots and a Macintosh, reached forward until his chin almost touched my bayonet, and said, in a stage whisper, 'Lex-ing-ton.'

"'The countersign is correct!'" said I; and the procession moved on.

"When they were out of sight I moved, too!—but in the other direction, holding my course for King street, and intending to take the main southern road."

"What did you do with your musket?" asked Leigh Terrell.

"O, I just rammed it under a culvert, and pursued my peaceful way. Well, it looked like everything challenged me. I was halted by camp guards, by street patrols, by pickets, by scouting parties, but, I tell you, that magic word 'Lex-ing-ton' carried me through like a charm!

"Finally, on passing the last vidette, I was lucky enough to pick up a horse, and by dawn I was back with our own folks again. But, I tell you, I had a lot more trouble slipping back into our lines than I had in getting out of theirs."

When General Hood first halted his column a number of troops had strayed into the fields and woods to pick berries, and it was afterwards remembered that the guide's attention seemed to follow those soldiers, especially such of them as wandered toward a certain thicket near the edge of the forest.

We were soon to learn the meaning of this.

For in that thicket a frightful secret was hidden!—a secret which, if discovered, would doom that guide to a shameful death—a death of infamy, of nameless horror—his sepulchre the gibbet—his unburied flesh a loathsome meal for those evil birds which banquet on the dead.

Was there some pre-vision of this in that swift glance which he cast toward the open country as he half turned in his saddle and took a firmer grasp on the reins?

There were those among us who thought so, afterwards. Yet he must have known that escape by flight was impossible.

In a moment, however, the startled gesture was gone, and there was again about him that same air of negligent repose, that same tranquility of spirit which was enhanced rather than impaired by the amused and half scornful smile with which he regarded the scrutiny of those around him.

While we thus observed him, there was sudden commotion among the troops. Soldiers with grave faces, and some with flashing eyes, were hurrying from the eastward road. They had found a dying man—a Confederate dispatch-bearer, who had been dragged into the bushes and evidently left for dead. He had gasped out a few broken words—his dispatches had been taken; torn from his breast pocket; he had been "shot by one of our own men!"

The situation now was plain enough! That pretended southern guide was in reality a northern spy! He had taken his life in his hand and boldly flung it into the scale of war! The chances against him were infinite, yet so superb was his courage, so sedate his daring, that but for those unconsidered mishaps he would have won his perilous way! He would have blasted at its fruition the matchless strategy of Lee; he would smilingly have beckoned that magnificent army to its doom!

Never perhaps in all the tide of time did consequences so vast pivot upon incidents so trivial!

Had General Hood followed routine and turned to the left a certain trend of events would have been inevitable.

Stonewall's beleagured detachment would have perished. Longstreet's corps would have lost its base. Richmond would have fallen. John Pope would have been the nation's hero. The seat of war would have drifted toward the Gulf States, and the great tides of American history would have flowed along other courses.

But these things were not to be.

General Hood drew his brigadiers aside. The guide, or rather spy, glanced toward them, but remained unshaken. There was a certain placid fortitude in his manner which seemed incompatible with ruthless deeds. There was something of devotion in it, and self-sacrifice, relieved, indeed, by just a touch of bravado, but without a trace of fear.

None knew better than he that that group of stern-faced men was a drum-head court, and none better knew what the award of that court would be. He had played boldly for a mighty stake. He had lost, and was ready with the penalty!

There was a strip of forest where the roads forked, and among the trees was a large post oak with spreading branches.

General Hood pointed to the tree, saying that any of its limbs would do.

A Texas soldier remarked that there was no better scaffold than the back of a horse, and the spy, approving the suggestion, sprang lightly up and stood on the saddle. Half a dozen men were soon busy in the tree, fastening a bridle rein at one end and adjusting a loop at the other. As they slipped the noose over his head the spy raised his hand impressively:

"Stop!" he exclaimed, "I have three words more for you.

I am neither Frank Lamar, of Georgia, nor Harry Brooks, of Virginia. I am Jack Sterry, of the Jessie Scouts. I did not kill that rebel, but I was with those who did. His dispatches by this time are safe enough! I should like my comrades to know that I palavered with your army for a good half hour while General Pope was battering down your precious old Stonewall. Now, men, I am ready!—and in parting, I will simply ask you to say, if you should ever speak of this, that Jack Sterry, when the rebels got him, died as a Jessie Scout should!"

He folded his arms, and his horse was led from beneath his feet. General Hood turned aside, and, in subdued voice, gave the order of march, and the column moved on.

The writhing figure swung for a little while in the soft morning air, and was still, and there had gone forth to the God who gave it, as dauntless a spirit as ever throbbed in mortal clay.

Within two hundred paces lay the yet warm body of the Confederate dispatch-bearer. "Aye," you may say, "but that is a different matter; he was a rebel."

I will not answer that.

The youth lay there, stretched on his native soil; his breast clotted with gore, and his big blue eyes staring vacantly into the sky. He had been pitilessly slain—slain without warning, slain by a pretended friend, slain while doing his part in behalf of a cause which, whether good or evil, had at least for him the sanction of a father's blessing and the consecration of a mother's prayers.

Lieutenant General William Tecumseh Sherman has done much and written much. Many of his deeds and words will be remembered when The Commentaries shall have been for-

gotten. And yet the better half, the deeper lesson, of his voluminous memoirs may be epitomized in his own three burning and let us hope remorseful words, "War is Hell!"

The troops—well rested now—struck up a swinging stride along the road from which the spy had vainly striven to divert them. Thoroughfare Gap was barely seven miles distant, and with that gateway in our hands the divided wings of Lee's army would soon be reunited, and the grand strategy of the campaign would have been achieved.

But Thoroughfare was not to be had without a struggle.

Robert E. Lee had supposed himself to be measuring swords with John Pope, and he had therefore taken risks which he never would have dreamed of if battling with an ordinary adversary.

But General Pope had under him a wayward soldier—Irvin McDowell by name—and when Pope ordered McDowell to rush his troops to Centreville, and get between "the rebels" and Washington, McDowell distinctly disobeyed!

The trouble with McDowell was that he had discerned the real nature of the situation.

He had commanded on that same field the year before, and he knew every stream and ford and road and mountain pass in all that region.

He felt that General Pope had been beguiled by Stonewall's daring feint on the Capital, and he believed that Lee's main army was approaching by way of Thoroughfare. And so instead of rushing everything northward to save Washington he rushed six brigades with heavy artillery southward to block Longstreet. The consequence was a race for the mountain passes and a struggle for their possession!

The rest is history!

Before the Federals had made good their clutch on Thoroughfare the Confederates flanked the pass and won it!

Thus Jackson was rescued, Lee's army was reunited, the North and the South in all their plenitude of strength were confronting each other, and the result was Second Manassas—that most dramatic conflict of the age—boldest in strategy, richest in episode, most varied in its changing fortunes, and altogether the best balanced and most picturesque battle ever lost and won on American soil.

A Letter From Scout Cussons

In a letter to the publishers Scout Cussons says: "I was riding with General Hood at the head of Longstreet's column when the false guide attempted to mislead us toward Aldie; and that afternoon I made notes of the incident, describing the guide's manner and recording his language as nearly as memory would serve.

"In my narrative I have accepted the common theory that General Pope's frantic orders on the night of the 28th resulted entirely from A. P. Hill's bold feint on Washington; but my personal opinion is that the imperative orders and desperate efforts of that fatal night were chiefly due to Pope's belief that his spy's mission had been successful,—that Jack Sterry had really diverted Longstreet's command north of Bull Run mountain. This assumption would explain much which is otherwise inexplicable, for the swift dash toward Washington was as swiftly withdrawn, and it alone could have had but a temporary effect.

"Stonewall Jackson's purpose was simply to relieve the Federal pressure at Thoroughfare until Longstreet could force a passage. The temporary diversion was successful, notwithstanding McDowell's soldierly disobedience, and in a few hours General Pope knew that there were no Confederates in force north of Centerville.

"Of course, we must allow that General Pope was beset by unusual difficulties. We must not forget that he was without food or forage; that his reserve supplies had been captured; his communications cut; his railroads torn up; his bridges burned; his troops worn out; his ammunition well-nigh exhausted, and that at best it is by no means an easy task to march a famished army through a ravaged country on a misty, moonless night.

"Under such conditions misfortune must be looked for.

"And so, as we recall the horrors of that tragic night we again

behold that most pathetic of war's sorrowful pictures—the spectacle of unavailing sacrifice—of sturdy valor, fate-defying, yet fruitlessly flung away!

"There at Groveton is King's heroic division. While on march it has struck Jackson's battle line, and is maintaining singlehanded its bitter struggle far into the night—its unsuccored wounded abandoned at last on the stricken field. Nearby are Sigel's devoted ten thousand, fuming to join the battle yet unaccountably restrained. There, too, is the gallant Reynolds, impatiently awaiting orders to advance, yet receiving none, and finally picking his way through the black night toward his old camp at Manassas.

"From the dim woods heart-rending groans are heard—the groans of wounded soldiers, crawling in search of ditch or pool, and longing only to quench their thirst and die. There are frantic cries, too, from despairing horsemen—bewildered staff officers charged with battle orders for corps commanders, but hopelessly lost—unable to find or follow a road—dazed by the glare of camp fires—blundering into fences—entangled amid tent ropes—plunging through groups of sleeping men, but utterly unable to get guidance or direction from any living creature.

"Clouds of stragglers are colliding in their mad quest for water, while pioneers with flickering torches only add to the gloom. A distinguished major-general is lost in the woods; unhappy Fitz. Porter is blindly groping and praying for the dawn; loyal McDowell is disobedient to his chief; veteran Ricketts is marching into space as the sun goes down; impregnable Thoroughfare is relinquished without a real battle, and that vital mountain pass thus opened for the momentous re-union of Jackson and Longstreet!

"Yet all this tumultuous chaos may resolve itself into something like attempted strategy if we assume that General Pope was striving to effect dispositions which would enable him to crush Longstreet while marching under the false guidance of Spy Sterry.

"But here the question naturally arises, 'Where was the Federal cavalry?'

"Well! That was General Pope's crowning misfortune. His cavalry was broken down—unfit for service—incapable of either masking his own movements or penetrating those of his adversary.

"And so, back yonder at White Plains, when Hood ordered a reconnaisance northward toward Aldie, Pope's people, I imagine, mistook the reconnoitering party for the advance of Longstreet's main army.

"Hence the Bull Run passes were abandoned, and there was a wild but fruitless attempt northward, an attempt which actually relieved Jackson and half opened the gate to Longstreet! And that—I have little doubt—was the real mischance which spoiled the plans and closed the career of Major-General Pope.

"It will thus be seen that at a critical moment that daring youth Jack Sterry, carried in his single hand the fortunes of that great campaign."

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